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the sound discretion of a trial court. [*Procter & Gamble Co. v. Bankers Trust Co.*, 78 F.3d 219, 227 \(6th Cir. 1996\)](#).

When deciding whether to grant a protective order, the court must remain cognizant that public access to court documents is a fundamental feature of the American judicial system. *See Procter & Gamble Co.*, 78 F.3d at 227; [*Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp. v. Fed. Trade Comm.*, 710 F.2d 1165, 1177 \(6th Cir. 1983\)](#). Unwarranted secrecy of court documents precludes the public's right to act as an important check on the judicial system's integrity. [*Id.* at 1179](#). For this reason, a presumption in favor of public access to judicial records exists. *See, e.g., In re Cont'l Ill. Sec. Litig.*, 732 F.2d 1302, 1308 (7th Cir. 1984).

In [*Tinman v. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Michigan*, 176 F. Supp. 2d 743, 745 \(E.D. Mich. 2001\)](#), the court observed that in order to have confidential information in a court record kept under seal, the movant must make a specific showing that "disclosure of the information will result in some sort of serious competitive or financial harm." [*Id.*](#) This Court agrees that a showing of substantial personal or financial harm is required to justify an order sealing any documents in its file.

This Court is a public forum, not a private dispute resolution service. Despite this, the parties have asked the Court for blanket authority to designate documents as "confidential" and to file them under seal. The parties, however, do not sufficiently demonstrate that this case warrants such a broad order. The Plaintiff and Defendants have failed to show that serious financial or personal harm will result from the public disclosure of the information. After reviewing the underlying claims and facts of this case, the Court believes that the documents filed in this case are not likely to contain privileged or confidential information.

Of course, the parties are free to enter into a private contractual confidentiality agreement

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with respect to disclosure of documents and information. Nor does this Court intend to prevent any of the parties from moving to seal an individual document in the file, provided that they make the required particularized showing. At the present time, however, the parties have not sufficiently shown the need for a protective order to be entered in this case.

Accordingly, this Court **DENIES** the parties' joint proposed protective order.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: March 13, 2008

s/ *James S. Gwin*
JAMES S. GWIN
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE